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Psy(co)motion: Anti-Production and Détournement in Affective Musical Cartographies

Abstract

This chapter discusses the musical compilation series *Psy(co)motion* in the context of a schizocartographic analysis. It introduces the set of psychogeographically-oriented CDs within the mix-tape/CD phenomenon while situating it as a form that challenges ossified systems of power. Considering concepts such as aesthetics and affect, the mix CD series uses Félix Guattari's theories concerned with production, singularization and reterritorialization. The chapter goes on to discuss whether *Psy(co)motion* manages to successfully recuperate itself through the molecular creation of the object, and via its virtual and physical dissemination.

Introduction

In the future, when social scientists study the mix tape phenomenon, they will conclude – in fancy language – that the mix tape was a form of ‘speech’ particular to the late twentieth century, soon replaced by the ‘play list’.

(Wareham, 2004, p. 28)

In February 2016 the last mix CD in the *Psy(co)motion* music series was released alongside a limited edition booklet about the series. I began creating these CDs in 2013 as a way of finding something creative to do while writing-up my PhD research, but also it was a continuation of a hobby I had begun a couple of years previously: *découpage* by using old maps. Having been interested in mixtapes since the 1970s, creating themed mix CDs that related to my own field of research, seemed like a good way of combining the two.

The mixtape phenomenon began during the period of the 8 track music player in the late 1960s, but picked up with the availability of the cheap and ubiquitous compact cassette. While the cassette was created in the early 60s, it was the release of the Sony Walkman in 1979 that not only

made cassette music more available in High Street record shops, but also the copying of music from an LP onto a cassette became a useful way of creating and sharing portable music. The mixtape, and the mix CD that followed, are examples of *détourned* youth culture inasmuch as they avert the capitalist process of music production. They became a big part of American hip-hop culture in the 1980s, encouraged by the creation of street music which was played out of the back of vans with the use of 'ghettoblasters'.¹

But, it is the 'mix' element of these types of music-sharing media that is key as a form of creative expression. Mixtape/CDs are not the wholesale copy of an album, but a selection of specific tracks from different sources. They might be based on a theme, music genre, or just be a selection of music you like that you want to introduce to a friend to (see Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* 1995). Or, they may even be a window into who you are that you want to share with a potential or new romantic partner: "CD technology displaced the cassette in the mainstream, and it is just recently that mix CDs have become a new cultural love letter/trading post." (Moore, 2004, p. 12).

What is schizocartography?

This chapter introduces the *Psy(co)motion* series of psychogeographically-oriented mix CDs through an analysis underpinned by the theory of Félix Guattari and using a psychogeographical approach known as schizocartography. The chapter also discusses whether *Psy(co)motion* manages to successfully recuperate itself through the molecular creation of the object within the process of production and dissemination. At this time it will be useful to provide a definition of schizocartography:

Schizocartography offers a method of cartography that questions dominant power structures and at the same time enables subjective voices to appear from underlying postmodern topography...It attempts to reveal the aesthetic and ideological contradictions that appear in urban space while simultaneously reclaiming the subjectivity of individuals by enabling new modes of creative expression. Schizocartography challenges anti-production,

the homogenizing character of overriding forms that work towards silencing heterogeneous voices. (Richardson, 2015, p. 182).²

I developed schizocartography from Guattari's terms "schizoanalysis"³ and "schizoanalytic cartography". Schizocartography provides an opportunity for multiple ways of operating in different contexts and for reading those environments. It critiques the conventional ways of viewing, interpreting and mapping different spaces, be they physical, abstract or virtual. The 'schizo' aspect of Guattari's term 'schizoanalysis' refers to the way that the verbal expression of the schizophrenic is untranslatable through the usual semiotic channels of understanding. Schizoanalysis sought to promote an "equal acceptance to all desire whether it makes sense or not, by not seeking to make subjectivation fit in with the dominant significations and social laws" (1984, p. 77). In more general terms it is "the analysis [of] subjective productions in a given problematic context" (Guattari, 2013, p. 18). This allows the use of schizocartography as a critical method which can be transferred to other institutions, settings and places, such as music production. Here is a definition of musical schizocartography as it has been defined in the booklet accompanying the series (Richardson, 2016):

When pertaining to music, schizocartography is concerned with the aesthetic and psychological reactions to urban spaces as they are translated into song. It is especially interested in music that looks at the dominant influences that appear in urban space, and the concept of affect as it is related to the lived experience and heterogeneity. But, ultimately, schizocartography has its roots in the individual responses to urban spaces, be they songs about the city that used to be one's home or about exploring new spaces...(Richardson, 2016, p. 2).

Détourned production

[Figure 1 here]

Figure 1: Mixtapes from the 1980s and 1990s

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In figure 1 you can see a selection of my old mixtapes covering the 1980s and 1990s. In 2013 I could have easily created the *Psy(co)motion* series as a purely online form of music-sharing. However I liked the idea of something physical, that I could create a sleeve for, that people could hold in their hands and that they could keep:

The art - and make no mistake about it, it is an art - of making a mix tape is one lost on a generation that only has to drag and drop to complete a mix. There's no love or passion involved in moving digital songs from one folder to another. Those 'mixes' are just playlists held prison inside a device. There's no blood, sweat and tears involved in making them. (Catalano, 2012)⁴

The objective behind the creation of the first of these mix CDs -*Psy(co)motion: A compilation of understated progressive rock* (A Ministry of Concrete/Admit One Collection 2013) - was to explore the psychogeographical nature of progressive rock music, create a hand-crafted limited edition sleeve made from an original hard copy map, and to give them out as gifts to my urban walking friends and colleagues who might also appreciate 'prog'.

[Figure 2 here]

Figure 2: The first CD in the series: *psy(co)motion: A Compilation of Understated Progressive Rock*

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This first CD (figure 2) was made out of an old road atlas of the UK. All the labels, titles and track listings were separate pieces of paper which were individually applied with glue. This was made into an envelope for the CD. The 'PSY(CO)MOTION' label itself utilised a font that mimicked a hand-held Dymo label-maker (which became popular in the late 1970s), thus giving the sleeve a 'retro' look. As is the case with the tracks on all the CDs produced for the series, the music is invariably about urban space, walking, movement or the city, as you can see with the track listing above. I only created ten limited edition copies of this CD, as the cover was so labour-intensive to make. The idea of only producing limited editions of each CD came about for a number of reasons. This was not only because of the effort required in producing each individual copy, but also to attach

value to something that is rather more a craft than a 'product': "Think of the limited edition signed print, which mediates between the accessibility of the mass-produced commodity (but which breaks the plate after the production run to guarantee *limited* singularity)" (Frow, 1997, p. 62).

When I made this first CD I did not plan on making a series, it was intended to be just an extension of my self-created cartocraftery project.⁵ I was attracted to the idea of *détournement* from both the perspective outlined by the Situationist International, but also because it is a key part of schizocartography. The Situationists used the term *détournement* to express the need for a continual re-working of the past in order to resituate it in the form of the new. They stated that it "signifies the reinvestment of products abstracted from the ends contemporary socio-economic organization gives them" (1996, p. 107). Their plan included rerouting desires back into this process and altering how the end product appeared in order to make claims on an alternative aesthetic value which opposed the intended one (I will return to the concept of aesthetics later). The relationship between *détournement* and the schizoanalysis of Guattari is apparent in Guattari's questioning of overriding forms and how they can become re-appropriated, enabling a reformulation (a reterritorialization) to occur which appears in the form of a translation of certain structures. This re-appropriation is a key part of schizocartography, but it is also part of the process of music sharing using the mixtape/CD: "The mix tape is a list of quotations, a poetic form in fact: the cento is a poem made of lines pulled from other poems. The new poet collects and remixes" (Viegener, 2004, p. 35).

Guattari believed that capitalist consciousness pervaded all aspects of postmodern life and this pervasive influence occurred through anti-production: 'It is impossible to separate the production of any consumer commodity from the institution that supports that production...The State machine and the machine of repression produce *anti-production*, that is to say signifiers that exist to block and prevent the emergence of any subjective process.' (Guattari, 1984, p. 34) (Guattari's italics). Guattari thought that any process that was antithetical to that of the capitalist project will be prevented, as much as is possible, from emerging. The signs that capitalism creates

discourage any singular processes of individuation and attempt to reroute subjective desires back into capitalist production: this is anti-production.⁶

[Figure 3 here]

Figure 3: A city-oriented compilation: *psy(co)motion 2: A Schizocartography of the 80s City*

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The sharing of mixtapes/CDs reroutes individual desires into the subjective production process and at the same time stymies the usual capitalist mode of production. This is how one mixtape creator explains it:

Unable to express himself in a 'pure' art, the collector finds himself in obsessive acquisition. Collecting is strangely hot and cold, passionate and calculating. All we can agree upon is that it's not the same things as making art. Or is it? A mix tape can never be perfect. My taste as a mixer tells you even more about me than my taste as a consumer already does. No mix tape is accident. (Viegener, 2004, p. 35).

This element of desire is key for Guattari and is part of the individuation of the person. Creating and receiving mixtapes/CDs operates against the grain of a capitalist subjectivity which is tied up in one of the attainment of mass produced consumer goods. For Guattari it is desire that enables creativity to be expressed and that challenges the accepted, dominant logic of a given situation. Desire is the productive and constructive force of life. *Psy(co)motion* was becoming a molecular movement that was expressing this productive desire, from both the perspective of the producer (myself) and also its recipients. This process is acknowledged by another mix tape fan: "Making mix tapes for friends and acquaintances that served as letters/conversation pieces/gifts was a prominent element in a complex practice...a way of keeping in touch, exchanging, communicating thoughts and feelings – a practice of excessive yet sensitive articulation" (Koether, 2004, p. 50).

Due to the popularity, and shortage, of the first *Psy(co)motion* CD I needed to improve the production process in order to be able to share more of the CDs. The easiest way to do this was to create the sleeve by using software instead of my previous hand-made method, and to place it into a

plastic sleeve rather than create an envelope template that required cutting and gluing. The cover for *Psy(co)motion 2: A schizocartography of the 80s city* was produced digitally. The map was chosen from my own collection of hard copy maps and was scanned into the computer. The stylistic choices were my own, based on how I was feeling at that time. Guattari uses the term 'singularization' as the process by which these desires are expressed in a given moment: singularization is a process of becoming which has a restorative effect by reconnecting previously disconnected elements or systems (1995, p. 19-20). The Situationists also express desire in a similar way: "The really experimental direction of Situationist activity consists in setting up, on the basis of more or less clearly recognized desires, a temporary field of activity favourable to these desires" (Situationist International, 2006, p. 49).

As before, I distributed the CDs using my online contacts. Since *Psy(co)motion 2* was a themed collection of 1980s music, it is likely that this appealed to some individuals more than others. But it is also possible that those having already received the first CD of the series would like the second one to add to their collection. It was becoming apparent that I was now creating a musical schizocartography and that it was a reflection of an unconscious desire to freely create during a time when PhD thesis production (a somewhat enforced, focused and hierarchical form of production) was dominating my life.

[Figure 4 here]

Figure 4: A more abstract compilation: *Psy(co)motion 3: Wide/Open Closed Spaces*

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The aesthetics of the brand

By the time I was producing *Psy(co)motion 3*, the CDs had a theme, a subtitle, their own 'brand', and also came with an insert. *Psy(co)motion 3: Wide/open closed spaces* was "a schizocartography of 90s britpop and indie" and was a "Particulations/Schizocartography Production". Choosing a title for your mix CD is an important aspect of its creation: "It didn't matter

if the cassette was a subtle gift to a would-be lover, an offering of empathy to a newly single friend or a morose reminder to yourself of the dark abyss that was your life – you had to have the right title.” (Catalano, 2012). The title of the mix CD says as much about you as does the selection of songs and the way they are sewn together: “it wasn’t good enough to just take a bunch of love songs and throw them on a tape. It was about so much more than grouping some tunes together. They had to segue.” (Catalano, 2012). The new insert in this edition of *Psy(co)motion* explained to the listener what both schizocartography and musical schizocartography were. The series was beginning to have a particular aesthetic assigned to it which made it immediately recognisable to those who may be collecting them, as is described by one of the recipients of some of the *Psy(co)motion* CDs:

“Although I like the music I tend to use the CDs more as physical objects, usually arranged in combination with other items, such as books, magazine and ephemera. My aim is to represent topics of interest at that time, posting photos online, particularly on Twitter and Facebook” (Bill Davis).

Aesthetics is a key function of the branding of capitalist products, but it is also a key component of schizocartography and is intrinsically tied to affect. While aesthetics has traditionally been attributed to the philosophical study of beauty within the sphere of the arts, in the context of schizocartography it is a sensory event as it pertains to the reaction a person has to a specific setting. In regard to musical schizocartography it is tied up in both the aesthetics of the physical object and the music pertaining to it. An individual’s response can provide “opportunities for resingularization through the opening of new universes of reference” (Genosko, 2002, p. 91).

Aesthetics is connected to the term ‘affect’ because it is concerned with the reaction of an individual to an event or situation. Affect is not the same as emotion or mood. Emotion has an apparent stimulus and mood is a rather more generalised feeling, often without an obvious cause. In psychology ‘affect’ is mostly seen as positive or negative and involves an interactive process of some sort. It is considered to be an instinctual reaction. In philosophy ‘affect’ is a term used by a number of poststructural theorists, including Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (when writing together), and also Brian Massumi. In *The Autonomy of Affect*, Massumi describes affect as “intensity owned and

recognised" (1996, p. 221). It is "autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is" (Massumi, 1996, p. 206). Affect is considered to be reflexive in that when you influence some 'thing' – an event or an 'other' – you are reciprocally affected (Massumi, 2002). It is, therefore, relational.

[Figure 5 here]

Figure 5: A selection of electronica, ambient and house tracks: *Psy(co)motion 4: Spatial Extrusions*

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By the time I had produced *Psy(co)motion 4: Spatial extrusions: A schizocartography of noughties ambient-lounge and electronica, with a touch of house...* I was starting to realise that what had begun as a molecular practice was beginning to turn into something much more molar. In chemistry 'mole' refers to a specific aggregate of molecules and is used as a unit of measurement. For Guattari molar forms exist in dominant structures, while molecular ones proliferate in heterogeneity within individual and group subjectivities. The mix CD series, with its distinctive brand, was too recognisable and predictable, less spontaneous and fluid, and was becoming fossilised within a clearly delineated production and distribution process.

In *Chaosmosis* (1992) the musical refrain (as it pertains to polyphony and heterogeneity) is a key example Guattari uses in order to express how molecular revolutions can be produced. These ruptures can be biopolitical breaks that express socio-political action or they may be forms of creative expression that operate across domains through the utilisation of alternative modes or materials of communication. I was beginning to feel that *Psy(co)motion* was no longer producing "assemblages of enunciation capable of capturing the points of singularity of a situation" (Guattari, 1995, p. 128), instead it was becoming a predictable formulae, expressing less creativity and becoming homogenised. I decided to end the series with one final CD and an accompanying booklet.

A retrospective of the series

Psy(co)motion REDUX: A Schizocartographical Retrospective of the 70s and 80s (An Urban Gerbil Production)⁷ is the final CD in the series and had a different look and feel from its predecessors. The background to the sleeve was an old online map of Yorkshire (where, at the point of creating the booklet, I resided in the UK). The 'redux' part of the title suggested something that was being brought back (in the filmic sense it often refers to a re-edit and in music it is generally a remix). The tracks are not a 'greatest hits' from the series, but a selection of urban walking related tracks that had not been included previously. The new sleeve style was intended to denote a break from the brand, but also was intended as a signifier of the end of the series, along with the 12 page book which included images of all the previous CD covers and some additional text.

Psy(co)motion is a *détourned* object: it involves re-appropriation in the use of existing songs which are re-presented in a modern and alternative format (not that this is new to mixtapes/CDs). It also opens up inventive avenues - especially of a psychogeographical nature - that might be closed off due to what could be called creative protectionism. The series also has some elements of the *dérive* (the drift) in its playful and somewhat tongue-in-cheek construction. These are all qualities of schizocartography. I like to see *Psy(co)motion* as a kind of wander through the psychogeographical elements of my own record collection which I shared with others. The Situationists described the urban walking practice of the *dérive* as a 'mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique through varied *ambiances*'. (Situationist International, 1996, p. 69). *Psy(co)motion* could be considered an experiment which appears as the output of the mix CDs, individually representing particular spatio-musical *ambiances*: the 80s city, wide/open closed spaces, spatial extrusions and so on. The Situationist describe *détournement* as the "integration of present and past artistic production into a superior milieu" (Situationist International, 1996, p. 70). While it would be an exaggeration to describe *Psy(co)motion* as a 'superior milieu', it does re-present musical components from a cultural past into a new form. They also appear as a type of musical collage, what Guattari would describe as an assemblage: a coming together of elements that, in their reorganisation, create a unique arrangement.

As for the challenges to anti-production, I believe *Psy(co)motion* successfully blocks the signs which capitalism creates that discourage any singular processes of individuation: “Mix tapes mark the moment of consumer culture in which listeners attained control over what they heard, in what order and at what cost” (Viegener, 2004, p. 35). This counters capitalist subjectivity, which “always leans in the same direction, that of the neutralization and expulsion of processual singularities” (Guattari, 2013, p. 44). Anti-production attempts to reroute subjective desires back into capitalist production and the mix CDs help to question the ubiquitous and permeating character that capital uses to galvanize and promulgate the rhetoric behind the notion that ‘there is no alternative’, especially in relation to creative output: “Desire is always extraterritorial it – deterritorialized-deterritorializing; it passes over and under all barriers” (Guattari, 2009, p. 148). I propose that the outputs that appear under the label of *Psy(co)motion* are products of desire which challenge the most dominant desire of all, capitalist consumption and production. Guattari states that schizoanalytic cartographies act “as a supplement to these classical functions of *representation* and *denotation*...setting in motion a function of *existentialization*.” (2013, p. 35) (Guattari’s italics).

In conclusion: curator as story-teller

Thus, *Psy(co)motion* became an existentializing experience for its creator. For its listener, in their reading of this alternative representation and denotation, the receipt of the CD opened up a relational space of sharing that gave voice to the mix CD and, thus, the creativity of its creator. This formed a momentary assemblage that prevented desires being taken up into the greater order. *Psy(co)motion* “eluded the ordinary games of discursivity and the structural coordinates of energy, time and space” (Guattari, 1995, p. 138). Was *Psy(co)motion* successfully recuperated? Well, schizocartography is always a continual process that needs to be constantly reworked and this is also something that the Situationists were aware of in relation to their own psychogeographical practices. I believe it worked for a time, but I also witnessed the process of its undoing.

This is what the user known as ‘Exsanguination’ says of mixtapes on the Mixtape Collective

website. It sums up well the affective way that creators of mixtapes/CDs hope that their listeners will respond to them. It also expresses many of the 'tenets' of schizocartography (creativity, relationality and existentialization): "Mixtapes are an art, and it takes skill to make one. Mixtapes tell a story, share a moment or share a feeling. Mixtapes should be able to affect the listener and keep them begging for more. I'd like to think my mixes can change the listener in a little way. Sometimes, I think they do." (Exsanguination, 2006).

As for the creator of the mixtape/CD, what can we say about her? Is the production and distribution of mix CDs a narcissistic act, for instance, or is it, perhaps, about a fear of annihilation in a digital world that might threaten a sense of self? In his book *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* (2014) David Balzer discusses the rise of the use of the term 'curator' in regards to creating collections of anything from clothes to music. He believes this began in the mid-1990s and that we now live in a "curationist moment" (2014, p. 9). In the book Balzer interviews the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. She says: "We now live in a society where everyone [fears] they're the same, so they want to specify and differentiate...My playlist is different from your playlist; my Facebook page is different from your Facebook page. It's a sense of anxiety, where you think you don't exist if you're not different from everybody else" (2014, p. 7). Despite this, one recipient of *Psy(co)motion* believes that because creating mix CDs requires effort, they have more value than the playlist:

In general, I prefer mixtapes to playlists because they demand thought – you have to fit them within a specific time limitation, so you have to pick and discard. If someone offers to introduce me to music I'd always rather get a CD, because it tells you as much about what they find important in the music as the music itself. (Andy Evans)

Mix CDs might be about differentiating oneself in regards to preferences, choices or tastes. We could describe it as a form of self-marketing, however it may be less pejorative to describe mixes as a form of self-narrative: they say something about you to the recipient of the CD. The music, the mix theme, and the way the CDs are presented provides a cultural insight into the giver – sometimes

even a socio-political one, too. But, also, the re-presented music forms a new story in its re-contextualisation. It also enables free-floating songs that, in the new media, are often amputated from their albums: “the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers each element its new scope and effect” (Debord, 1989, p. 29). The music is reformed, becomes *détourned*.

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¹ The Sony Walkman prompted the 'Home Taping is Killing Music' copyright slogan during the 1980s, which was created by the British Phonographic Industry. However, the mixtape/CD is usually criticised less for taking the profits of the record labels than it is the profits of the music artists themselves. With the event of online music sharing, this view has changed somewhat, with some artists even giving away their music for free.

² For further information on schizocartography, please see 'Developing Schizocartography: Formulating a Theoretical Methodology for a Walking Practice' in *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography* edited by Tina Richardson (Rowman and Littlefield International 2016).

³ While the term 'schizoanalysis' is derived from 'schizophrenia' (as discussed in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* collaborative series of Deleuze and Guattari), it does not promote mental illness. Rather, 'schizo' is used as a way of offering up the possibility of multiple voices, and alternative world-views, amongst other factors.

⁴ I did use drag and drop for mixing, and a CD, rather than a cassette, for practical reasons: because people could then play it on their computer, they may not have a cassette deck, and I was copying music from my CDs and also from my own online library.

⁵ 'Cartocraftery is the tongue-in-cheek re-appropriation of maps for the purposes of *détournement* (the recuperation of past forms and ideas). Old items are 'mapped' through the process of paper lacquering, then decorated and given an amusing name based on the map used' (Richardson, 2012).

⁶ To take a music related example of how this works: punk, originally an underground sub-culture, became taken up into popular discourse and then was appropriated by the capitalist machine.

⁷ Urban Gerbil is my own not-for-profit small press which includes the production of psychogeographical zines and artists' books.